



Photo by Darren Sullivan

The WaterDome, a major parallel event of the World Summit on Sustainable Development, was opened by former President of South Africa, Nelson Mandela, HRH the Prince of Orange, and Africa's Water Ambassador, H.E. Salim Ahmed Salim (not pictured).

Water Judged Crucial During World Summit Negotiations

The UN's World Summit on Sustainable Development, which took place August 26 to September 4 in Johannesburg, South Africa, received mixed grades from the staggeringly diverse array of participating organizations and individuals.

Where there was some semblance of unity and praise, however, was on the water issue, which took on a more prominent role than in Rio de Janeiro ten years ago.

During these ten years, water has been recognized as a key to sustainable development. Ongoing discussions during the World Water Weeks in Stockholm as well as events like the 2nd World Water Forum in the Hague and the International Freshwater Conference in Bonn have contributed to this development.

In the preparations for the World Summit and in Johannesburg, the activities in

the WaterDome contributed remarkably to put water high on the political agenda. "The governments of South Africa and the Netherlands and the African Water Task Force should be congratulated for taking this initiative – it was a success," said srwi Director Anders Berntell.

The strongest endorsement came in the final plan of implementation, which was agreed by the participating 191 countries. In it, the countries committed to halve the proportion of people without access to basic sanitation by 2015 as well as halving the proportion of people without access to safe drinking water by 2015 – the latter half being explicitly stated in the Millennium Development Goals laid out in the UN's 2000 Millennium Declaration.

Another target that did not receive the same attention in media is to develop integrated water resources management plans

and water efficiency plans by 2005. This tool, if implemented properly, will be the most important vehicle in the future to address conflicts between different use categories, upstreams and downstream users, and thereby to strive for the realization of the concept of "hydosolidarity" launched and advocated by SIWI since 1998.

In addition to the binding commitments, a number of water related initiatives were announced during the Johannesburg Summit, some of them formally labeled as "type 2 partnership initiatives" and some more informal.

Added Mr. Berntell: "In spite of the initial criticism that the concept of 'initiatives' received prior to the Summit. I believe that they eventually might turn out to be as powerful as the negotiated texts, when it comes to effects on the ground." These included, among others:

- The European Union announced the “Water for Life” initiative that seeks to engage partners to meet goals for integrated water resource management and increased water efficiency, water and sanitation, primarily in Africa and NIS/Central Asia.
- The Africa Water Facility, to achieve Millenium Declaration Goals related to water and sanitation, was launched as an off-shoot of the New Partnership for Africa’s Development (NEPAD).
- The United States announced USD 970 million in investments over the next three years on water and sanitation projects.
- The Asian Development Bank provided a USD 5 million grant to UN Habitat and USD 500 million in fast-track credit for the Water for Asian Cities Programme.

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“With the outcome of the World Summit,” said Mr. Bertell, “water has rightfully been acknowledged as an issue of top priority by the international community. Now we enter into the phase of implementation and follow up. The World Water Week in Stockholm will be an important platform for continued dialogue to this end.”

Mr. Bertell also noted that the Stockholm Statement of the 2002 Stockholm Water Symposium was well received both in the WaterDome and in the negotiations amongst delegations in the Sandton Convention Centre. The Statement was distributed to delegations during the plenary debate on Water and Sanitation on August 28.

WaterDome Focuses Attention

An important parallel event that highlighted water issues in Johannesburg was the WaterDome, themed “No Water, No Future” after HRH Crown Prince Willem of Orange’s report of the same name to UN Secretary General Kofi Annan.

The WaterDome raised awareness of water as a key aspect for sustainable development, drew attention to important initiatives announced in Johannesburg and provided a platform for dialogue between a broad group of stakeholders, water-related activities, policies, initiatives, new technologies, products, etc. One special focus was on Africa through an “African Water Village” Among the 200 organizations involved were a cross-sector of organizations, institutions and networks from Sweden or based in Sweden.

Organized by SIWI, the Swedish Pavilion included Global International Waters Assessment (GIWA), International

Sir Richard Jolly, Chairman of the Water Supply and Sanitation Collaborative Council, and HE Ronnie Kasrils, South Africa’s Minister of Water Affairs and Forestry, speak about the Water, Sanitation and Health (WASH) initiative launched in connection with the WaterDome.

Coral Reef Initiative (ICRI), Stockholm Environment Institute (SEI), Stockholm International Water Institute (SIWI), Swedish Environment Technology Network, Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida), University of Linköping and University of Stockholm. The Swedish organizations also organized a series of side events (see right).

For more on the outcomes of the World Summit on Sustainable Development, visit www.johannesburgsummit.org. To read more about the WaterDome, visit www2.waterdome.net.

Swedish WaterDome Side Events

- Hydrosolidarity: Tomorrow’s Life Saver
- The Sustainable City: The Chinese-Swedish Partnership
- Water as a Public Good: The International Task Force on Global Public Goods
- People and Reefs: A Partnership for Prosperity
- GIWA: A Global Project to Assess Transboundary Problems in Shared Waters
- How Ecological Sanitation Can Help Solve the Global Water and Sanitation Crisis



The eight organizations in the Swedish Pavilion joined more than 200 organizations at the WaterDome.